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PSB D-17

PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

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STAFF STUDY ON PUBLICITY WITH RESPECT TO NOVEL WEAPONS

PROBLEM

1. To determine basic policy guidance for the content of governmental statements with respect to the existence, development of, and contemplated purposes of new or "novel" type weapons.
2. To establish a general procedure for the release of information with respect to novel weapons.

DEFINITION

3. For the purpose of this study, novel weapons are considered to include all weapons using atomic power for propulsion or explosion, guided missiles, new biological, radiological and chemical weapons, and any other novel weapons that may appear in the future.

ANALYSIS

4. There is need for broad policy guidance for all appropriate executive departments and agencies on the release of information regarding new weapons, based on considered appraisal of the relative advantages and disadvantages of the release of any particular item of information in the light of the following fundamental principles:

a. Public responsibilities

The very basis of our system of government requires that the people must be kept informed to the broadest extent consistent with the national security. Each department and agency has its own peculiar responsibilities, some of which are statutory, for reporting to the Congress and the people, for justifying requests for appropriations, for the advancement of the public welfare, and for other purposes.

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Security considerations require that certain weapons information must be kept secret, but this category should be kept to an absolute minimum.

c. International repercussions

The present international situation requires that the effect upon foreign countries, whether allies, neutral or potential enemies, should be taken into account with regard to the timing, place of release, and source of any public statements regarding new weapons.

d. Fact and Fantasy

With respect to fact and conjecture, or even deliberate fantasy, there is clearly need for a concerted governmental effort to carefully calculate the desirability of any departure from fact in the release of weapons information in order to overcome the inevitable confusion which results from independent report, denial, inspiration and elaboration by various officials.

DISCUSSION

5. a. The fact of American atomic superiority undoubtedly has a deterrent effect on Soviet leaders. Whether indiscriminate statements about atomic and other novel weapons produce any worthwhile effect on the Kremlin may be doubted.

Such indiscriminate statements do, however, produce harmful effects in the free world and impede our efforts to build a healthy international community. They weaken confidence which is needed for recovery. They encourage neutralism and stimulate the urge to stay out of the East-West conflict. They identify the U.S. with war and destruction and help Communist propagandists to fasten the "war-monger" label on us.

b. A totalitarian nation like the USSR may effectively use terror as an instrument of national policy. But terror cannot be used effectively by the U.S. if it desires to retain moral leadership over the free peoples and build a better world.

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c. Within the U.S. itself, ill-considered statements about novel weapons may create a false sense of security, make it difficult to get support for conventional forces, lead to expectation of miracles in war and undermine public willingness to face casualties and sacrifice.

d. It follows that U.S. statements on novel weapons must be carefully considered, must be based upon basic U.S. policies, and must take into account the possible and probable effects upon critical world audiences.

We, should therefore seek to exercise a deterrent effect on the Kremlin by methods as discreet as possible without involving our national leaders in a policy of terror.

We should also present information on novel weapons in such ways that it will strengthen, not shake, the confidence of the free peoples.

THE POLICY BASIS

6. a. Our national objectives, which basic policy guidance must support are:

- (1) To build a healthy ~~free~~-world community capable of its own defense.
- (2) To deter the USSR from
  - (a) undertaking general war,
  - (b) undertaking further aggression short of war.
- (3) To reduce Soviet power.

b. More specifically, basic guidance on all armaments must be governed by the tripartite disarmament proposal made before the UN General Assembly. The President's speech on this proposal emphasized:

- (1) the good faith of our proposal;
- (2) the inter-dependence of novel-weapons and conventional weapon disarmament;
- (3) our intention to build strength while always continuing actively to seek the reduction of armaments under proper safeguards.

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- (4) Responsibility of the Soviet leaders for continued increase in world armaments.

It is clear that our statements on novel weapons must be consistent with that proposal. Therefore, all high level statements on novel weapons should hereafter be consistent with the four points above. Emphasis should be varied by the several media to fit specific target audiences, in accordance with policy guidance to be prepared by the Department of State.

7. Global treatment

a. Before public statements are made on novel weapons, these questions should be answered.

- (1) Does the American Congress or public need this information?
- (2) Will this information really help deter the Kremlin?
- (3) Will this information strengthen or weaken the morale of the free world?
- (4) Are these weapons important enough, and is their completion date near enough, to justify a statement?

b. High-level statements, as contrasted with media play, have a global audience. The content must therefore either represent a compromise between the requirements of different audience groups, or be chosen with the most critical audience group in mind. The primary audience group is the strategically important, potentially neutralist group: West Germany, France, Italy, and the Middle East. Additionally, such statements must be based upon the policies indicated in the President's reduction of armaments speech.

c. Taking the above factors into consideration, the following is recommended as interim basic guidance:

- (1) Emphasize the peaceful purposes of novel inventions, and the uses to which we are putting them.
- (2) Novel weapons are being developed for defensive purposes; we continue actively to seek ways of reducing armaments and controlling armament production.

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- (3) Novel weapons control and conventional weapons control must go hand in hand.
- (4) De-emphasize the mass effect of novel weapons and emphasize the developments in the characteristics of the weapons permitting greater target selectivity.
- (5) We are for control of novel weapons and against city-bombing in principle, but do not make statements which amount to a commitment not to use strategic A-bombing or which might give Soviet leaders assurance of immunity from strategic attack.
- (6) Shift the moral blame to the Soviet leadership for the continued uncontrolled development of strategic novel weapons.
- (7) Emphasize that manpower inequalities between the free-world and Soviet blocs will be greatly minimized by the development of tactical novel weapons; and that the free world can, when these weapons become available, oppose with novel weapons Communist peripheral (cold war) applications of strength without the need of bringing on general war.

Note: The above guidance is not to be construed as absolving officials of their responsibility for obtaining security clearance for statements prepared in conformity thereto.

8. Area Media Treatment

Specific areas require special emphasis in media treatment. The basic effects sought are indicated in Tab C. Department of State should prepare detailed guidances to achieve these effects.

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9. The Reduction of Panic Effect

a. Under normal conditions, panic effect is controllable by adherence to the guidance of paragraph 7. In addition, wide publicity in optimistic tones should be given to the state of our air defenses.

b. When war-crises occur, panic tendencies will probably occur.

A guide to treatment at such times is attached as Tab B.

10. Evaluation

The systematic revision of basic guidance requires continuous evaluation of the effects abroad of public statements on novel weapons. Such evaluation should be undertaken by the Psychological Strategy Board.

11. Mechanism for Novel-Weapon Guidance

a. There are at present many mechanisms for coordinating the release of information. None has, however, proven adequate for effective guidance and control of public statements on novel weapons.

b. Policy guidance should be produced by a mechanism which can take into account the responsibilities of the President and of the heads of the departments and agencies concerned and which may thus assure the effective implementation of approved policy. Such a mechanism, furthermore, should be a continuing medium for timely, constructive policies made in an atmosphere of careful deliberation of all factors involved insofar as possible, rather than merely for meeting emergencies or for censorship.

c. Guidance requires continuing revision, to fit:

- (1) Special cases.
- (2) Changes in the facts about novel weapons.
- (3) Changes in security restrictions.
- (4) War-crises.
- (5) Basic changes in U.S. policy.
- (6) Types of novel weapons. A separate guidance for each may become necessary.
- (7) Deception purposes.

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d. There should be constituted a Novel Weapons Information Guidance Committee to be charged with providing the information indicated in sub-paragraph c above, as well as with revising, keeping up to date, and issuing national policy guidance on publicity with respect to novel weapons. This committee should be chaired by a member from the White House Staff and should include members from the Department of State, the Department of Defense, Central Intelligence Agency, the Atomic Energy Commission, the Joint Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy, and the Staff of the Psychological Strategy Board, with the latter member acting as Executive Secretary. A representative of the Federal Civil Defense Administration should sit as appropriate with the committee for information of interest to that agency.

e. Although individuals on the highest level of government are engaged in operations of world-wide significance the great majority will, because of immediate pressures, desire, or lack of competent advice, usually discuss novel weapons in the context of the impact upon the domestic audience. Statements made for political or budgetary purposes or under the exhilaration of an audience have been and will continue to be the source most of the unfortunate effects on our psychological operations.

Practice has shown that few individuals can be expected consistently to seek advice from any designated source. No mechanism for clearance of public statements ever has been satisfactory. Consequently, it should be the constant charge of the Novel Weapons Information Guidance Committee to remind officials that plans for psychological operations do exist and that their public statements have an important bearing on those plans. By this means it may be possible to prevent harmful statements and to encourage helpful ones.

f. Department of State should prepare detailed policy guidance in conformity to the PSB guidance included herein or to be issued hereafter.

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g. High-level statements on novel weapons should be prepared in conformity to Department of State guidance. It is desirable that the Director of the Psychological Strategy Board be informed in advance of pending high-level statements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

12. a. That Tab A, B, and C be approved for issuance to appropriate departments and agencies.
- b. That the coordinating mechanism recommended in sub-paragraph 11 d above be approved, organizing action to be undertaken by the PSB staff.
- c. That the Department of State be assigned the task of preparing a detailed interim guidance in conformity with Tab A/<sup>Tab B</sup>and Tab C.
- d. That the members of PSB authorize the Director to conduct an evaluation of the effects abroad of public statements with respect to novel weapons, using the facilities of the departments and agencies responsible for the conduct of psychological operations.

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